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COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND CONFLICT PROPENSITY AS SOURCES FOR CONSTRAINTS ON THE LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR.

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TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH SCHOOL SYSTEM ENVIRONMENTS MAY BE DISTINCT IN TERMS OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND CONFLICT PROPENSITY, THE VOTING RECORDS, SOCIOECONOMIC DATA, AND ASPECTS OF BOARD OF EDUCATION INTERACTION WITH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OF FOUR SUBURBAN ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES WERE ANALYZED. A COMPARISON OF CONSTRAINTS AND SUPPORTS FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITIES INDICATED A HIGHER DEGREE OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP IN THE DISTRICT WITH THE MOST ABUNDANT RESOURCES AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILL. THIS WAS EVIDENCED BY A REPRESENTATIVE COMMUNITY CAUCUS ENJOYING BROAD SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL PROGRAM AND ENTRUSTING EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKING TO THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT. DIFFERENTIAL MANIFESTATIONS OF SUPERINTENDENT ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY AND VARYING DEGREES OF SUCCESS ACHIEVED IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITIES WERE BRIEFLY REVIEWED. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (NEW YORK CITY, FEBRUARY 18, 1967). (JK)

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND CONFLICT PROPENSITY AS SOURCES FOR CONSTRAINTS ON THE LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

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Success in school administration is not wholly dependent upon factors internal to the school system. It is due also in significant measure to the ability of a superintendent to govern his own official behavior according to the expectations of his community publics; those whose values, interests, ideologies and resources define his community environment. To state the matter more simply, the limits within which a school superintendent may act will be determined in part by the character of his school district community.

The research to be reported here is based on the notion that among the contextual dimensions relevant to school administration are two fundamental factors of community environment, community resources and propensity toward conflict. For example, the presence in a school district of a high level of human and economic resources (such as an educated and well-to-do population employed in high status occupations) will very likely be accompanied by skills in organization, personal communications, human relations, and the kinds of occupational experience which will be conducive to the existence in local school government of relatively stable and structured processes for decision making, and to a high reliance on the expertise and professional status of a school superintendent. In lower resource areas where such organizational skills are not so abundant the decision processes will be expected to operate on a less structured, more experimental basis, with less school board deference to a superintendent's professional stature.

Community conflict propensity, defined as the collective potential for clashes of interests, values, and ideologies relating to school affairs, is also expected to have implications for administrative roles. Where values, interests and ideologies are widely shared the incidence of and propensity toward local school-related conflict should be low because part of the basis for controversy is absent. The superintendent's working context in such situations should be much more open and less constraining than it would be if a high degree of conflict existed.

Based on these notions about community environments the predictions which this paper examines are that in school districts where the aggregate level of community resoures is high, and also in those where conflict propensity is low, administrators will be expected to have broader decision latitude, to take more active roles in community leadership, and to have fewer limitations imposed upon their actions by community attitudes.

Tables I and II contain demographic and electoral data which partly describe community resources (in socio-economic terms) and conflict propensity (in terms of participation and negative voting in school elections)[1] in four suburban Illinois communities selected as sites for a research project intended to identify significant factors affecting superintendents' roles.[2] The tables show that each community provides an environment for its school system which is different from the others in terms of resources and conflict propensity.

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[1]The assumption here is that much affirmative and some mildly negative sentiment toward schools and school-related issues will be expressed in non-participation. If the assumption is correct, increases in participation, especially that of a negative character, should be discernible where interests or values are perceived to be threatened.

[2]The project is fully reported in R. J. Snow, "Local Experts: Their Roles as Conflict Managers in Municipal and Educational Government," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, Northwestern University, 1966.

TABLE I

SOME DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN STATUS CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN POPULATIONS IN FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS SELECTED AS RESEARCH SITES[a]

	District A	District B	District C	District D
EDUCATION: Proportion of the total population 25 and over who are:				
Elementary Educated:	13	17	29	36
High School Educated:	33	46	52	51
College Educated:	54	38	20	12
INCOME: Proportion of all families with annual income levels:				
Less than $7000:	15	20	24	37
$7000 to $9999:	8	25	37	39
$10,000 or more:	77	56	40	24
EMPLOYMENT: Proportion of total employed persons in the following job classifications:				
Craftsmen, Operatives, or Laborers:	7	20	40	50
Professional-Managerial:	51	43	23	15

a - Source: David W. Minar from 1960 census data

TABLE II

PROPORTIONS OF PARTICIPATION AND NEGATIVE VOTING IN SCHOOL BOARD AND REFERENDA ELECTIONS IN FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS[a]

	District A	District B	District C	District D
School Board Elections				
Participation:	5.1	6.3	9.6	9.7
Negative Voting:	.3	13.0	27.9	30.2[b]
Tax Rate and Bond Referenda	(3)[c]	(8)	(1)	(1)
Participation:	15.7	17.5	24.7	6.0[d]
Negative Voting:	23.3	50.8[e]	48.9	42.7

a - Sources: David W. Minar; Midwestern . County Clerk; school board officials in each district. The data are proportions of participation by eligible voters in school board elections and in tax rate and bond referenda for a ten-year period between 1957 and 1966, and proportions of total votes which were cast for losers in board elections and against tax rate increases or bond issues in the same time period.

b - This figure is much reduced because two of the last three school board elections have been uncontested. For the three most recent elections participation has averaged 5.2 per cent and negative voting has averaged 14.1 per cent. School board electoral conflict is sharply decreasing in District D.

c - The number in parentheses represents the number of referenda submitted in each district during the ten-year period.

d - These figures are compiled from voting data from only one referendum which was submitted in 1959. It won with more than 57 per cent of the vote cast in its favor. No other referenda were submitted.

e - This figure is inflated by the loss of three referenda in the past two years. Prior to 1965 referenda participation in District B was 4.5 per cent and negative voting was 35.3 per cent. School issue controversy is sharply increasing in District B.

Table I shows decreasing proportions of college-educated persons, lower family incomes, and lower status employment across the communities from A through D. Table II shows less participation (except in District D) and lower proportions of negative voting (except in District B) in school board elections in the higher resource communities (a finding enlarged upon elsewhere).[2] It also shows, however, that board election conflict in District D has been sharply reduced during the past three years, and that in District B, where eight referenda have been submitted to the voters in the past ten years, a sharp jump in negative voting has recently occurred.

Increasing conflict propensity appears in District B despite the higher resource levels which would suggest the presence of accompanying conflict management skills. Conversely, there has been relatively no conflict in District D during the past three and one half years, even though the lower resource characteristics of its population might suggest a higher conflict potential. The districts are clearly different from each other in theoretically interesting ways, and can be placed in the cells of a four-fold table based on the two major variables as indicated in Figure 1.

FIGURE I

Comparison of Community Resources and Conflict Propensity Levels of Four Illinois School Districts

Community Resources	Conflict Propensity: Low	Conflict Propensity: High
High	District A	District B
Low	District D	District C

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[3] David W. Minar, Educational Decision-Making in Suburban Communities, Cooperative Research Project No. 2440, U. S. Office of Education (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1966); and "The Community Basis of Conflict in School System Politics," American Sociological Review, 31 (December, 1966), pp. 822-83

If research expectations stated above are borne out, data reported here will show conditions for broad administrator roles to be most favorable in District A where resource levels are high and conflict propensity is low. Administrator latitude in District B will be hampered by higher conflict propensity levels. Constraints on the Superintendent in District D should be traceable to lower levels of community resources. Latitude in District C will be expected to be narrowest since resource levels are low and conflict propensity is high.

Data to be reported are of four types. Community influences on administrator roles were assessed in interviews with the superintendents, the members of their school boards, and with citizens reputed by official authority holders to have influence in educational affairs. Newspaper coverage of educational matters was also examined in each community for clues about the state of school-community relations. Superintendent-board relations were measured through a systematic observation procedure utilized in formal school board meetings over time, and through the use of an instrument designed to measure division of labor between the boards and the superintendents.

Community Profiles: Constraints and Supports

A brief analysis of community characteristics and expectations of superintendents in each school district based chiefly on the interview data supplements the demographic and electoral data in Tables I and II and provides initial information about role constraints on superintendents.

Community A has no centralized power structure. Social power is widely diffused and rests with the persons who hold village, school board, PTA, or civic leadership positions at any given moment. It is a quiet, stable, upper middle class suburb, almost completely residential in character, which is inhabited by Protestants who have been in the majority for many years, and by a large minority of well-to-do Jewish residents, most of whom are more recent arrivals in the community.

The importance of the schools in the community's social structure is suggested by a community leader who said, "Most adult friendships here are based on

friendships between children." A PTA leader stated that people were "assimilated into community life" through their school interests and PTA affiliations. The schools thus contribute toward ordering the community's social life.

Superintendent A perceives the schools to be the focal point of community interest. He perceives satisfaction on the part of community residents with his administration and is confident of community support. There have been infrequent reports of minor acts of vandalism by school children, and there is a perception by some Jewish residents that the two schools which serve most of their children are too heavily Jewish. They feel that some minor revision of the present neighborhood school policy should be made in order to provide their children a proper social exposure. Both these matters concern the superintendent though neither appears to be major at the present time.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the community is a caucus committee which is set up to select the best qualified candidates for all positions of local authority including the school board. The caucus provides clear evidence of the community's ability to make collective decisions in non-controversial ways. Each of several neighborhood precincts is represented by three elected delegates who meet together for an annual survey of the need for candidates. They jointly contact, interview and recruit persons they consider most qualified, and then present a single slate of candidates to the voters. There has never been a challenge to a caucus candidate for the school board since the procedure was adopted in the 1930's. The caucus operation guarantees Superintendent A of school board members who are representative of the most successful and respected lay citizenry in the community. It obviates the need for electoral conflict and helps to promote consensus and a "sense of community" in attitudes toward the schools. Board candidates are nearly always persons who have demonstrated a supportive interest in the school system by their activity in PTA affairs, the League of Women Voters, or as members of the community caucus committee.

The existence of the caucus committee and the deep interest in schools which appears in the local newspaper and in interview data gathered from community

leaders are evidences of the high value placed upon schools in District A. Community leaders believe their school system to be among the finest in the country and the reputation of Superintendent A is closely tied to that of the school district. Both as a person and as an administrator he is highly respected.

Community B is at present pervaded by political conservatism, which, especially in the past three years, has been a major source of pressure on the school leadership and Superintendent B to alter curriculum away from "progressive education" and "life-adjustment" courses. Emphasis on phonics instruction in reading curricula is vigorously urged, and a dissatisfaction with a perceived "liberal indoctrination" in the curriculum is so intense that it is a topic of general community conversation. Recently some parents complained of embarrassment at a memorial service when their children did not know the words to "The Star Spangled Banner." One community leader stated that because of widespread conservative sentiment the recommendations of the superintendent to the school board to accept federal assistance under one of the titles of the National Defense Education Act would cause "a lot of people in this community to be upset." An ex-mayor removed his children from the public schools reportedly because he objected to the "frills" and the "liberal exposure" they were getting.

Education is highly valued in District B, a fact which only serves to intensify the discontent of many of the most intensely active residents of the community who have fixed ideas about the functions the schools should perform and the specific curriculum to be taught.

A caucus committee exists in Community B for the nomination of school board candidates, but it differs from the Community A caucus in that it is exclusively concerned with the nomination of school board candidates and is made up of representatives from community organizations rather than neighborhoods. Interviews and letters to the newspaper editor reveal some community feeling that the caucus is not adequately representative and that it is dominated by persons

supportive of the school administration who are unresponsive to criticisms felt to be legitimate. One city councilman said of the caucus nomination process, "Unless you are supportive of the incumbent superintendent you will never be nominated for the school board. You never will!!" Persons critical of the school board are frustrated by their feeling that the caucus, the school board, and the superintendent are all unwilling to recognize them as a legitimate group and to give reasonable attention to their demands. They feel they have no effective avenue of communication with the school system and have reacted in the past two board elections by supporting the nomination of an independent non-caucus candidate. One of the independents was elected and presently sits on the board.

Superintendent B, of course, is the prime target of the forces organized to bring about curriculum change. The pressure which critics apply to him in open board meetings has caused him to alter a long-standing style of communicating with the school board. He feels now that he must act more covertly, a policy which frustrates certain school board members who report that they are often unable to get the clear recommendations and background information they need to inform their decisions. Superintendent B, in spite of general and widespread personal support from the non-active public, is arousing some personal animosity among school board members as well as among community critics. The failure of the three most recently submitted referenda is additional evidence that the school system in District B is in a period of crisis. A prominent local leader stated that the present school situation is "the most critical problem we've ever faced in the history of the communtiy."

Community C is extremely fragmented, fast-growing, and essentially new. Between 1950 and 1960 the population increased 1000 per cent, producing a new community very different from the one which had previously existed on the same

geographical site. More than three-fourths of the homes enumerated in the 1960 census had not existed ten years before.

The focus of interest in Community C, because of the common plight in which many new, first-home suburbanites have found themselves, is in the municipal government and the level and quality of services it provides. Most of the local leaders interviewed seemed to feel that the schools were "a thing apart," and they expressed little knowledge and less concern about schools. Superintendent C appears to be largely free from community expectations.

District C is in the older section of the community encompassing the residence area of the "old guard" political leaders whose positions of authority in municipal government were taken away when the new influx of homeowners formed a coalition to assure their representation in community decisions. Thus the area of most rapid growth and the center of the most intense community activity is outside District C, a fact which assures the district's continued isolation from the interest of a major part of the community.

One major homeowners group is organized in District C and three of its leaders serve on the school board. These three and two additional members of the all-male school board are volunteer firemen. Through their common associations they appear to have solidified themselves as a unit in the public eye and they collectively enjoy broad support. The incumbent board members have served an average of nearly 13 years and do not appear to be threatened in the immediate future by electoral defeat.

Only a small number of persons have observed the board closely, and it is these persons who often are unhappy with its style of operation. The newspaper editor says bluntly, "Not one member of the school board is really qualified to serve." Two PTA officials seem to agree but they have not been successful in exerting much influence for change. The school tax rate is very low because of a

high concentration of light industry in one corner of District C. Popular satisfaction and general support of the schools, coupled with the low tax rate, and the lack of awareness of the role to be expected of the school administration frees Superintendent C from public constraints. As will be explained below, however, he is severely constrained by his school board.

The public image of the superintendent is equivocal. Those who are critical of the school board are upset that the superintendent is unwilling to "fight back" when his prerogatives are imposed upon. Those who support the board also appear to support the superintendent, and they are a clear majority.

Community D has a history of intense conflict over school issues. A long-time superintendent was asked to resign several years ago after allegations were made about misuse of school funds. His successor reported in 1962 that there was "no real community interest in the important aspects of educational improvement," and that the issue of "who was going to run things" absorbed most peoples' attention. He further complained of pressures on the schools from local political leaders, some of whom were using school board positions as stepping stones to municipal and township offices. A few years after the financial scandal a second superintendent resigned, precipitating an intense school board battle over a replacement. After a prolonged fight the present superintendent was hired on a 4-3 vote of the board.

Superintendent D presently perceives "a little bit of grumbling" in the community and the existence of a few local actives who keep a close watch on him, but he reports a definite change for the better in the internal harmony of the school board, as well as the removal of school affairs from the realm of local politics. The superintendent has worked on juvenile delinquency problems with a newly-elected mayor and each reports a friendly respect for the other. The mayor feels Superintendent D is capable of handling his own affairs, and that

municipal politicians should "keep their nose out of school business." Other local leaders indicated only slight knowledge of school affairs, and without exception they expressed admiration for Superintendent D.

General interest in the schools is described by Superintendent D as only fair, but he feels it is improving. One factor felt by the superintendent to hamper an increase in school interest is the relatively high proportion of population mobility which is a product of the existence in the district of many moderately priced multiple family housing units.

A certain degree of isolation of school affairs has been caused in District D by the efforts of the authorities in both the school and municipal politics to separate themselves in the public image, and by the lack of interest in schools of the relatively large numbers of non-participating, younger, more mobile families who, along with the older, long-time residents, are not in age ranges which produce school age children. The local press has largely ignored the schools.

At present there appears to be an "era of good feeling" between the schools and the community. One community leader said there had been a vast improvement in the integrity and conscientiousness of the school board and the superintendent and that grave doubts had existed in peoples' minds during past administrations which were now alleviated. He added, "Everyone is very pleased with our schools now. They are much improved. I've yet to hear any complaints."

Newspaper Coverage of School Affairs

The impression that school affairs are separated from other aspects of community life in Communities C and D is strengthened by data gathered from a newspaper analysis in each school district covering the period between July 1, 1960 and July 1, 1965.

Superintendents A and B were prominent newsmakers in their communities, while Superintendents C and D were scarcely mentioned in newspapers serving their

districts. School Board meeting observation notes indicate that newspaper reporters were always present covering meetings in Districts A and B, but that they were never seen at meetings of Boards C and D. During the period of analysis some 300 items of school news appeared in the Community A newspaper, and 259 such items appeared in the paper in Community B. In five years only 34 articles containing school news appeared in the Community C newspaper. In Community D only 45 items appeared in five years, despite scandal and controversy. Of the 45 items, 11 were paid political advertisements for school board candidates which appeared during the period of political influence on the board.

Summary: Community Constraints and Supports

Resources, conflict propensity and the community attitudes and expectations which emanate from them may influence administrative roles directly or indirectly. Figure II (next page) is a summary chart of previously discussed community attitudes toward schools and superintendents in each district on dimensions which range from direct constraints, through indirect constraints and indirect supports, to direct supports. The figure shows that Superintendents A and D have no direct constraints on their roles, while both have direct supports. On the other hand, the majority of the influences on both Superintendents B and C are direct and indirect constraints upon their roles.

Constraints Imposed by School Boards

Some of the constraints which have roots in community environments are imposed on superintendents through the school boards. Table III shows status characteristics of school board members and indicates that they differ from each other in ways that are generally representative of aggregate resource levels of their communities.

FIGURE II: Expectations of Superintendents on Dimensions of Constraint-Support

SUPERINTENDENT A	SUPERINTENDENT B	SUPERINTENDENT C	SUPERINTENDENT D
	Personal animosity toward superintendent Perception of need for curriculum change	Public image equivocal	
DIRECT CONSTRAINTS	DIRECT CONSTRAINTS	DIRECT CONSTRAINTS	DIRECT CONSTRAINTS
Vandalism Religious segregation in the schools	Political conservatism Perceived lack of responsiveness by the board Discontent coupled with a high community value on education	Lack of threat to school board members Discontent with board and character of decision-making Separation of school affairs from community interest	Population mobility Little bit of grumbling Few "actives" who watch superintendent closely Separation of school affairs from community interest
INDIRECT CONSTRAINTS	INDIRECT CONSTRAINTS	INDIRECT CONSTRAINTS	INDIRECT CONSTRAINTS
High level of community interest Schools provide basis for ordering social life "Community" sense about schools	Inactive majority support High level of community interest in schools	Lack of awareness of the school administration General support of the schools Absence of threat of financial problems	Increasing community interest Schools removed from politics
INDIRECT SUPPORTS	INDIRECT SUPPORTS	INDIRECT SUPPORTS	INDIRECT SUPPORTS
The caucus committee Schools highly valued and regarded High level of personal respect for superintendent			Good personal community relations "Era of good feeling"
DIRECT SUPPORTS	DIRECT SUPPORTS	DIRECT SUPPORTS	DIRECT SUPPORTS

TABLE III

AVERAGE STATUS CHARACTERISTICS OF BOARD MEMBERS

IN FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS SELECTED AS RESEARCH SITES

	District A	District B	District C	District D
Years Education Completed beyond High School	5.4	4.9	1.0	1.4
Occupation Index Score[a]	4.00	3.42	2.14	2.50

a - Computed on the basis of four points for professional-executives, three points for small business-sales, two points for white collar, one point for skilled worker, and no points for laborer positions. Housewives were excluded from the computation, or their husband's occupations were included when they were known.

School Boards and Division of Labor

School board members were asked to indicate what they perceived to be "actual" and "ideal" divisions of responsibility in several specific policy areas between themselves and their superintendents. Specific items in the division of labor instrument dealt with personnel, community relations, curriculum, administration, finance, long-range planning, and policy initiation.[3] Response alternatives varied in each case, but represented a dimension which can be characterized by the following:

4. These matters are handled entirely by the administration.
3. These matters are handled largely by the administration.
2. These matters are handled largely by the school board.
1. These matters are handled entirely by the school board.

The division of labor responses from school board members have been summed and are presented in Table IV (next page) in terms of average board responses. Thus, single means scores reported in the table represent the average response from each school board.

Board responses have been analyzed as they bear on three aspects of superintendent-board relations. These are "deference," "consensus," and "satisfaction," each of which in part defines a context of expectations held by boards for superintendents.

There are two measures of board deference to superintendents. The first is a comparison of the mean board responses to the item asking "Who should initiate policy matters?" Responses nearer 4.00 indicate greater deference to the superintendent. Table IV shows that deference in policy initiation decreases with the level of community resources. Only School Board A describes itself as willing

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[4] Division of labor instruments were modified from those used by Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason and Alexander McEachern in their role study of Massachusetts superintendents. See their Explorations in Role Analysis (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1958), pp. 343-348.

TABLE IV

SOME MEASURES OF DEFERENCE, CONSENSUS, AND SATISFACTION CALCULATED FROM MEAN RESPONSES BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS TO ITEMS ON AN "ACTUAL" AND AN "IDEAL" DIVISION OF LABOR INSTRUMENT

	School Board A	School Board B	School Board C	School Board D
Policy Initiation Deference[a]				
Mean response score from school boards to an item asking "Who should initiate policy matters?"	2.83	2.43	2.38	2.00
General Deference[b]				
Variance from a hypothetical point of absolute authority granted superintendents by school boards in their definitions of "ideal" divisions of labor.	1.022	1.535	1.827	1.138
Consensus[c]				
Variance of mean responses to each "ideal" division of labor item around a "grand mean response" to all items.	.189	.197	.362	.221
Satisfaction[d]				
Variance between "actual" and corresponding "ideal" division of labor items.	.320	.709	.769	.479

a - Responses between 2.50 and 3.00 indicate a preference for sharing policy initiation, but a willingness to allow the superintendent to take the lead. Responses below 2.50 indicate that the board prefers to take the lead. The lower the response the less willing is the board to defer to the superintendent in policy initiation.

b - Larger figures indicate less willingness to defer to the superintendent since the measure distance from a point of absolute authority.

c - Lower variance scores indicate greater consensus.

d - Higher variance scores indicate less satisfaction.

to allow the superintendent to take the lead in policy initiation, and its members clearly indicate that they prefer to share policy initiation tasks.

The second measure of deference is a calculation of the variance of each board's mean item responses from a hypothetical point (4.00) which represents complete authority in the hands of the superintendent.[4] The results, shown under "General Deference" in Table IV indicate that Superintendent A is most deferred to, with Superintendent D next, followed by Superintendents B and C in that order.

As a measure of the consensus of each of the school boards as to a proper division of labor between itself and its superintendent a "grand mean response" to all items on the "ideal" instrument by each board collectively was calculated, and the variance of mean responses to each individual item around the grand mean was computed. The rationale for this procedure was that the grand mean response represented a level at which each board perceived that labor <u>should</u> be divided. The differences between the mean individual item responses and the grand mean (when squared, summed, and divided by the number of items), represent the collective variance of individual item responses around the accepted labor division level, and thus the extent to which consensus exists. Lower variance scores represent more consensus. Table IV shows that consensus was greatest in School Board A, followed by Board B, third in Board D, and fourth in Board C.

Satisfaction with the existing division of labor between boards and superintendents was measured by comparing board responses on the "actual" instrument with responses to corresponding items on the "ideal" instrument in order to

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[5] The differences between each board's mean item response and a dummy response of 4.00 was obtained and squared. The squared differences were summed and the total was divided by the number of items for a variance score.

determine the extent to which actual and ideal definitions of division of labor were at variance with one another.[5] The difference between the two represents the extent to which each board collectively wants change. Data in Table IV indicate greatest satisfaction in District A, followed in order by District D, District B, and District C.

Overall Table IV shows that Superintendent A is most deferred to, that his board is the most of one mind about which tasks should be performed by themselves and which by the superintendent, and that they are the most satisfied of all the boards in the sample. On the other hand, and according to expectations, Superintendent C is deferred to less, his board is the least satisfied with the existing division of labor, and their consensus about division of labor is lowest among the four boards in the sample.

Superintendent D, although his board wants to take the lead in policy initiation, is "generally" deferred to, and his board appears to be relatively well satisfied with the way responsibility is divided. The incongruity indicated in the board's willingness to defer "generally" but not in matters of policy initiation, may be reflected in the slightly lower District D consensus score.

Superintendent B, who is deferred to in matters of policy initiation, is deferred to "generally" to a lesser degree, and there is a relatively high dissatisfaction indication. Board members in District B indicate more consensus on the existing division of labor than do the boards in the lower resource districts (C and D).

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[5] Items on the "actual" instrument called for board member perceptions of the existing labor division in a given policy area. "Ideal" items, on the other hand, called for an indication of preferred labor division. The differences between mean responses to "actual" and corresponding "ideal" items were squared, summed, and the total was divided by the number of items for a variance score.

Board Meeting Observation

Systematic observation of superintendent-board relations in public meetings in each district over a period covering several months[6] indicated that Superintendent A was unhampered in his interaction with school board members in the meetings. Meetings in District A were the least formal, and relationships among its members were probably the most friendly. Though proposals were discussed thoroughly there was no evidence of significant opposition to any administrative recommendation during the period the board meetings were observed.

Superintendent D was also granted wide latitude in formal board meetings, although some "needling" and opposition to a few minor administrative proposals was noted.

Superintendent B appeared to be in the midst of his greatest crisis in spite of long tenure in his position and a long history of harmonious board relations and effective educational leadership.

Superintendent C was the least relied upon by his board and the least successful in his board relations. Responsibilities which in the other school districts were very clearly administrative in nature were often assumed by individual school board members on the basis of a particular board committee assignment Acceptance of an administrative proposal without questions or sarcastic or hostile comments by board members was an extremely rare occurrence in District C.

Other observation data show that board meetings were longer in the high conflict districts (B and C), and that they required more substantive interaction between participants before decisions could be reached.

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[7] All verbal actions by each meeting participant were recorded using procedures modified from Bales' Interaction Process Analysis. Specific methods and detailed results are reported in Minar, Educational Decision Making in Suburban Communities, pp. 67-83, 140-145, and in Snow, op. cit., pp. 169-180 and 264-273.

Superintendents in all four districts were among the primary actors in board meetings. Individual participation data showed that Superintendents A and B tended to react to others participation in positive, tension-reducing ways to a greater extent than did their counterparts in lower resource districts. Superintendent C was alone among the four in reacting negatively, in tension-producing ways, to any significant degree. Aside from this negative reaction Superintendents C and D confined their participation largely to answering questions posed by board members. Superintendent D was the most active of the administrators, utilizing more total meeting time than his counterparts in the other communities to answer questions and present proposals in extensive detail.

The substantive content of the meetings was divided by individual issues into categories which included personnel, curriculum, school-community relations, facilities, finance, and administration. The bulk of the administrators' participation tended to occur in just a few of the issue areas rather then generally. Superintendents in higher resource districts (A and B) tended to participate more broadly. Table V shows issue areas where each superintendent participated most.

TABLE V

ISSUE AREAS WHERE SUPERINTENDENTS

PARTICIPATED MOST IN FORMAL BOARD MEETINGS

	Superintendent A	Supt. B	Supt. C	Supt. D
Proportion of total interactions from six meetings accounted for by superintendents	17	15	16	24
Issue areas where superintendent's participation exceeded his overall participation level	Personnel 23% Finance 20% Facilities 18% Administration 17%	Personnel 24% Administration 21% Curriculum 19%	Curriculum 21% Personnel 17%	Personnel 30% Facilities 30%

The table shows that Superintendent A participated primarily in four of the issue areas, Superintendent B in three, and Superintendents C and D in two each. Personnel, facilities, administration and curriculum appear to be areas where professional expertise is most called for.

Board Expectations of Superintendents

Specific responsibilities expected of superintendents by their school boards as indicated in the board member interview data are summarized and compared in Figure III (next page).

In the area of personnel all the superintendents are expected by their boards to take the lead, except Superintendent C whose personnel authority is severely restricted.

On curriculum matters the boards, again excepting the board in District C, are highly interested and quite active. Superintendent A is encouraged to be innovative and his latitude for experimentation in this area is very broad.

Planning is generally accepted as an adminisrrative function and is routinely expected of Superintendent A. School Board B is dissatisfied with its superintendent's performance in this area. Board C does not appear to be concerned about advance planning. Although Board D has not been actively concerned, Superintendent D has very recently taken some planning initiative.

Enforcement of school board policies is routinely expected of Superintendents A and D, while the board in District B shows uneasiness about a slowness in follow-up which they perceive on the part of their superintendent. Board members in District C act directly in enforcement of their policies, often becoming intensely involved with the operation of the school cafeteria, purchasing, personnel matters, and, most intensely of all, in new building construction.

School boards A and B have broader expectations of their superintendents in the area of information provision, especially in school policy matters. Members

FIGURE III: Specific Responsibilities Expected of Superintendents by School Boards

DISTRICT A	DISTRICT B	DISTRICT C	DISTRICT D
PERSONNEL: Supt. expected to take lead in hiring, staff administration, and salary recommendations.	PERSONNEL: Supt. expected to take lead in hiring, staff administration, and salary recommendations.	PERSONNEL: Board members interview personnel and set salaries. Also make District staff changes on their own authority.	PERSONNEL: Supt. expected to take lead in hiring and staff administration. One board member communicates directly with staff.
CURRICULUM: Innovation in curricula expected. It must have clear educational benefits. Experimentation encouraged.	CURRICULUM: Board members have great interest in curriculum problems. They expect Supt. to take the lead.	CURRICULUM: Supt. expected to take lead. Not an area of major board interest. Because of their intense involvement in other aspects of the District Administration.	CURRICULUM: Supt. expected to take lead. Board is very interested in this area of administration. One member says he cannot get information from the superintendent.
PLANNING: General expectations. Nearly all proposals originate with the administration.	PLANNING: Board dissatisfied with performance of Supt. General criticism for lack of adequate planning.	PLANNING: No mention of any expectation for a planning role by the Superintendent.	PLANNING: No expectations, but board members report Supt. has taken initiative.
ENFORCEMENT: Routinely expected. Only briefly mentioned.	ENFORCEMENT: Some Board complaint about slowness in response and inconsistency.	ENFORCEMENT: Board takes very active part in the enforcement of its own policies; especially in facilities, finance.	ENFORCEMENT: Generally expected, and administrative style admired.
INFORMATION: Facts to inform decisions; reports and studies requested by board. Not so much community information.	INFORMATION: One area of prime expectations. Facts to back board decisions. Community relations not prime area of expectation.	INFORMATION: Very narrow expectations. Board has own community contacts. They do not trust Supt.'s objectivity with facts.	INFORMATION: Facts to inform decisions. Limited area of expectations. Board members take initiative with community contact.
POLICY LEADERSHIP: Supt. expected to make general recommendations in all policy areas.	POLICY LEADERSHIP: Supt. expected to make recommendations, but also to provide facts for their support. Source of board dissatisfaction.	POLICY LEADERSHIP: Supt. may recommend, but board works over everything in extreme detail.	POLICY LEADERSHIP: Supt. expected to take policy lead. Personal sensitivity in accepting board suggestions mildly criticised.

of School Board D are not highly expectant that their superintendent be primarily a source of information, and members of School Board C do not trust their superintendent's objectivity in presenting facts.

In terms of general policy leadership, Superintendents A and D are given wide latitude, although Superintendent D has been mildly criticized for some personal sensitivity to suggestions for alterations in his policy recommendations. District B board members feel that their superintendent should and does take the lead in policy matters but they are not satisfied that he provides enough supportive information to adequately justify his proposals. The school board in District C works minutely over every proposal introduced by Superintendent C. Board meetings are marked by intense verbal conflicts, open hostilities, insults, and mutual impatience between the administration and the board.

Figure II shows generally wider prerogatives, broader expectations, and fewer limitations imposed upon superintendents by the school boards in District A and District D.

Conclusions

The evidence presented appears to support research expectations. Community environments, especially as reflected in resource levels and conflict propensity, appear in the districts examined to have important implications for superintendents' roles.

In District A abundant resources and accompanying conflict management skills, most clearly apparent in the operation of the community caucus, support an active leadership role for the superintendent, both in relations with the school board and in relations with the community.

The superintendent in District D does not enjoy the position of wide community leadership enjoyed by Superintendent A, but because of a relatively low level of school-related controversy (despite low resource levels) he has only minor

limitations imposed from his community, and he enjoys a high level of support from his board.

Propensity toward ideological controversy between local actives and school leaders in District B is the primary source of constraint on the school superintendent. The intensity of feeling in the community has brought about threats to the caucus procedure of school board candidate selection, it has stimulated suspicion and unwillingness to follow the superintendent's lead on the part of the school board, and it has contributed to the district's financial problems because the school's critics have openly and successfully campaigned against the school board in recent bond and tax rate referenda.

The absence of the kinds of organizational resources and attitudes which support Superintendent A is most clearly apparent in District C. Although open school-community conflicts are infrequent and direct community expectations of Superintendent C are minimal, he is under constant pressure from the members of his school board. Board members continually challenge the superintendent's proposals, and they closely observe and involve themselves in the administration of the district.

Administrative Ability

As a final point of conclusion, the different degrees of success in school-community relations achieved by Superintendents B and D introduces an opportunity to consider the importance to success of the individual superintendent's administrative and leadership ability.

Superintendent B appears to have failed to satisfy his critics sufficiently enough to avoid controversy. Not only has he disagreed with them, but he is perceived as being unwilling to recognize them as a responsible community group. The critics, therefore, have tried to open other avenues of expression to the school board. Their frustration with the superintendent's lack of attention has

made them more determined to be heard, and with the bond and tax rate failures and the election of a non-caucus candidate to the school board the crisis appears to be spreading.

Superintendent D is not faced with the same intensity of community interest in the schools, but in a climate which he knows to be potentially explosive because of its past history he has refused to wait for controversy to develop. He has attempted to open avenues for public participation in the schools by increasing the number of annual parents' nights, by stimulating the creation of "art parents" and "music parents" groups, by inviting a group of mothers to assist in the district's library development, and by working very closely with a school board-appointed citizens advisory committee which serves as a mechanism for two-way communication with community interests. The continually decreasing levels of conflict in District D attest to the success and acceptance of his efforts.